

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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USEEC

OECD

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: ENRG, UK
SUBJECT: CONCERN OVER U.S. OIL IMPORTS

REF: USEC BRUSSELS 428 (NOTAL)

1. VIEWS EXPRESSED ON GROWING U.S. OIL IMPORTS BY
ATTENDEES AT THE UNIVERSITY OF SURREY CONFERENCE
(REFTEL) ECHO CONCERNS WE OFTEN HEAR EXPRESSED IN
BRITAIN. AS INDICATED IN PARA 3 OF REFTEL, THERE WAS
A GENERAL FEELING OF FRUSTRATION EVIDENT AT THE JANUARY
3-5 CONFERENCE ON U.S. ENERGY POLICY OVER THE CONTINUED
LACK OF A LEGISLATED U.S. ENERGY PROGRAM. THIS PESSI-
MISM WAS INITIALLY LAUNCHED BY ONE OF THE SPEAKERS, WHO
PREDICTED THAT THERE WOULD BE NO LEGISLATION THIS YEAR
AND PERHAPS NONE FOR SEVERAL YEARS AND THAT CORPORATE
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PLANNING IN THE U.S. WAS GOING AHEAD ON THE BASIS OF
HIGH AND RISING OIL IMPORTS.

2. THE GLOOM DEEPENED WHEN AN EXXON SPOKESMAN
DISCUSSED HIS COMPANY'S REVISED U.S. ENERGY FORECAST
AND PREDICTED 1985 IMPORTS OF 12 MILLION BARRELS PER
DAY, OR TWICE THE LEVEL SECRETARY SCHLESINGER HAD

GIVEN LAST FALL IN PARIS AS THE U.S. GOAL. THE EXXON SPOKESMAN PREDICTED THE 12 MILLION FIGURE WOULD BE REACHED WITH OR WITHOUT AN ENERGY BILL AND NOTED THAT SOME ESTIMATES GAVE 1985 IMPORTS AS HIGH AS 15 MILLION BARRELS PER DAY.

3. WHILE THE DISCUSSION WAS NOT OVERLY DRAMATIC, IT SHOULD BE NOTED THAT QUESTIONS AND STATEMENTS FROM THE ATTENDEES REFLECTED A TONE OF QUIET PANIC OVER THE CONSEQUENCES FOR OTHER WESTERN COUNTRIES IF THE UNITED STATES GEARS UP TO IMPORT YET GREATER QUANTITIES OF THE PRESUMABLY LIMITED SUPPLIES OF OIL AVAILABLE. THERE WERE SUGGESTIONS FROM SOME EUROPEAN PARTICIPANTS THAT EUROPE MUST SOMEHOW ORGANIZE TO TAKE OVER LEADERSHIP OF THE WEST'S EFFORTS TO ADDRESS THE ENERGY SITUATION, AND ONE RAPPORTEUR ENCOURAGED DISCUSSION OF THE QUESTION OF RISING RESENTMENT AGAINST THE UNITED STATES FOR ITS WASTAGE OF ENERGY SUPPLIES THAT OTHER MORE EFFICIENT COUNTRIES MUST SHARE. HOWEVER, NEITHER OF THESE LATTER SUBJECTS PRODUCED UNANIMOUS OR EVEN CONCRETE CONCLUSIONS.

3. THESE SAME TOPICS OFTEN ARE ENCOUNTERED HERE IN DISCUSSIONS WITH GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS, MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT, AND OTHERS WHO ARE KNOWLEDGEABLE ABOUT INTERNATIONAL ENERGY POLICY -- EVEN THOUGH THE DIRECT CONSEQUENCES FOR BRITAIN ARE LESS SEVERE THAN FOR OTHER LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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EUROPEAN COUNTRIES. IN A RECENT CLOSED SESSION HELD BY BRITISH PETROLEUM FOR ECONOMIC OFFICERS FROM THE LONDON DIPLOMATIC CORPS, SIMILAR CONCERNS TO THE ABOVE WERE EXPRESSED BY EUROPEAN PARTICIPANTS. EVEN THE BP OFFICIALS JOINED IN BY REGRETTING THE DEGREE OF GENERAL ENERGY WASTAGE IN THE U.S. AND THE U.S. GOVERNMENT'S "SUBSIDIZING" THE CONSUMPTION OF NATURAL GAS BY MAINTAINING PRICE CONTROLS IN AN ERA OF GROWING SHORTAGE.

BREWSTER

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